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Fall 9-1-2000

### LS 381.01: American Indians and Film - Honors

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Autumn 2000  
Liberal Studies 381  
American Indians and Film/Honors  
T 3:40-5:30, Th 3:40-6:30  
GBB L09

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**Course Description:**

**The Lone Ranger and Tonto Fistfight in Hollywood: American Indians and Film**

This Davidson Honors College course is being taught in conjunction with the Five Rivers Festival of Film, held on campus and at various downtown locations Sept. 21-23, entitled "American Indians and the Mythic West: Films and Filmmakers." There will be an academic conference with screenings and speakers and a film festival with Native and non-Native filmmakers in attendance. You will have opportunities to participate in the conference and film festival, and some attendance will be required. For the remainder of the semester we will continue our examination of how American Indians have been depicted by others in feature films and documentaries and how Native filmmakers have depicted themselves and each other. We will pay particular attention to the uses of ethnic stereotypes and to constructions of femininity and masculinity in the films. Course requirements include a journal, a turn at facilitating discussion, and a term paper. Prior study of film theory and history helpful but not required.

**Required texts:** Sherman Alexie's *The Lone Ranger and Tonto Fistfight in Heaven*. Note: Alexie will attend the film festival, so start reading now. Other selected readings on reserve or online on ERes from the Mansfield Library. From the library menu choose Electronic Reserves, or go to <http://eres.lib.umn.edu/>

**Course requirements:** A journal, a turn at leading class discussion, and a term paper, as well as class attendance and participation.

**Journal:** The journal can take any format you choose and may be typed or handwritten. You should write a minimum of one page in response to that week's readings and viewings. I'd like to see that you are familiar with the material and that, even if you haven't yet mastered it, that you are engaging with it; beyond the one page you may also write about the ways in which issues raised in class intersect with your own life, current events, or anything else you find helpful. The journal is a good place to formulate questions you'd like to raise in class, to begin developing ideas for your paper, and to work through difficult or intriguing concepts.

**Discussion sessions:** You will each take a turn leading class discussion. This can take any form you like: asking discussion questions, giving a presentation and asking class members to respond, showing film clips in class, or whatever you feel will get a lively and productive conversation going.

**Paper:** A 6-8 page term paper will be due at our last meeting. You will receive a handout with details.

There is no good way to study film without actually watching films, so **attendance** at all class sessions and film screenings is mandatory. I'll allow 2 skips, no questions asked. After that, you will need a legitimate excuse, or your grade will be affected. Watching movies is more enjoyable when it's a collective experience anyway. In addition to being here, you need to keep up with the reading and **participate** in class discussions.

**Grading:** The breakdown will be as follows:

Journal:	25%
Paper:	25%
Leading discussion	20%
Participation:	20%
Attendance:	10%

### **The Five Rivers Festival of Film and Academic Conference**

The conference is Thursday, Sept. 21, all day in the UC Theatre. The film festival is Friday and Saturday, Sept. 22-23, with events at the Wilma Theatre, New Crystal Theatre, Center for the Rocky Mountain West, and the Missoula Children's Theatre. You will have chances to listen to and interact with Native and non-Native filmmakers, some highly paid professionals and some who are just scraping by. It will be especially invaluable for those of you who have filmmaking aspirations of your own. I beseech you to take in as much of it as you possibly can, since it's the *raison d'être* for this class. There is the added bonus of being able to see films on the big screen in 35mm instead of on video—an enormous difference. This may be your only chance to ever see these films in a theatre again. Two events are required, Thursday during class time and Saturday night (see syllabus). You can get extra credit for each event you attend beyond those two (I will have an attendance sheet at each event). You can get even more extra credit if you write a 2-page informal essay on each screening and/or discussion. Thursday's events are free except for the premiere that night. Most of Friday and Saturday's events cost \$5 each. You can volunteer to help with the festival in exchange for free passes and more extra credit. I'll pass out schedules, or go to [www.fiveriversfestival.org](http://www.fiveriversfestival.org) for full information

### **Voices for Justice: a Saul Landau film festival**

This is a related film festival at the New Crystal Theatre Sept. 17-20. Of particular interest to this class will be Sunday's program: *The Sixth Sun: Mayan Uprising in Chiapas* and *Papakolea: A Story of Hawaiian Homelands*. Wednesday night is the premiere of *Maquila: A Tale of Two Mexicos*, with the filmmaker in attendance.

**Celebrating Solidarity**, a reception for the filmmaker, will follow. Landau will also speak Thursday at the Five Rivers conference and show a 20-minute film, *Song for Dead Warriors*. As with the other festival, opportunities for extra credit and to volunteer abound.

#### **Week 1:**

T	9/5	Introduction
Th	9/7	<i>They Died with Their Boots On</i> (1942, Raoul Walsh, USA, 140 min.)

#### **Week 2:**

T	9/12	Journals due; discussion.
Th	9/14	<i>The Searchers</i> (1956, John Ford, USA, 119 min.)

#### **Week 3:**

T	9/19	Journals due; discussion.
Th	9/21	Start of Five Rivers Conference. No class; instead go to UC Theatre from 3-5:00 pm for a viewing and discussion of James Welch's <i>Last Stand at Little Big Horn</i> . (See me if you can't make it at 3:00.) I would be thrilled to also have you attend the premier of <i>Big Eden</i> at 9:00 pm. This is a gay romance filmed last fall around Glacier Park.

Saturday, 9/23, 8-10:00 pm, at the Wilma Theatre: *Smoke Signals*, with Sherman Alexie attending. **Required** (see me if you have a problem). I particularly urge you to also go to the screening and discussion of *Powwow Highway* Friday night at the Wilma at 6:30.

#### **Week 4:**

T	9/26	Journals due; discussion.
Th	9/28	<i>Flaming Star</i> (1960, Don Siegel, USA, 101 min.)

#### **Week 5:**

T	10/3	Journals due; discussion.
Th	10/5	<i>Little Big Man</i> (1970, Arthur Penn, USA, 135 min.)

#### **Week 6**

T	10 10	Journals due; discussion.
Th	10/12	<i>El Norte</i> (1983, Gregory Nava, USA/Guatemala, 141 min.)

#### **Week 7**

T	10/17	Journals due; discussion.
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Th 10/19 *Dances with Wolves* (1990, Kevin Costner, USA, 181 min.) NOTE LENGTH! We will go till approximately 6:45 pm this day.

**Week 8**

T 10/24 Journals due; discussion.

Th 10/26 *The Last of the Mohicans* (1992, Michael Mann, USA, 114 min.)

**Week 9**

T 10/31 Journals due; discussion.

Th 11/2 *Nanook of the North* (1922, Robert Flaherty, USA, 69 min.) and *Incident at Oglala: The Leonard Peltier Story* (1991, Michael Apted, 90 min.)

**Week 10**

T 11/7 Election Day. No school. Get thee to a voting booth!

Th 11/9 Journals due; discussion; view *Imagining Indians* (1992, Victor Masayesva, Jr., USA, 90 min.)

**Week 11**

T 11/14 Journals due; discussion.

Th 11/16 *Powwow Highway* (1989, Joanelle Romero, Jonathan Wacks, USA, 105 min.)

**Week 12**

T 11/21 *Smoke Signals* (1998, Chris Eyre, USA, 98 min.)

Th 11/23 Thanksgiving

**Week 13**

T 11/28 Journals due; discuss *Powwow Highway* and *Smoke Signals*

Th 11/30 *Ishi: The Last Yahi* (1992, Pam Roberts, USA, 60 min.) and *Pocahontas* (1995, Mike Gabriel and Eric Goldberg, USA, 81 min.)

**Week 14**

T 12/5 Journals due; discussion.

Th 12/7 *Where the Spirit Lives* (1989, Bruce Pittman, Canada, 97 min.)

**Week 15**

T 12/12 Journals due; discussion.

Th 12/14 PAPERS DUE; *Naturally Native* (1998, Valerie Red-Horse, USA, 109 min.); *Powwow Highway* (1989, Joanelle Romero, Jonathan Wacks, USA, 105 min.)  
party!

NO FINAL EXAM